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THE FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Report of a Group Convened at the Behest of
The Archbishop of Canterbury

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THE FAMILY IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

(The Report of a Group Convened at the Behest of The Archbishop of Canterbury)

Introduction.

Our subject was given us with two sub-titles: "The Family in Contemporary Society: (a) Problems of Population; (b) Effects of Rapid Social Change on Family Life." It became clear to us in discussion that the sub-sections are not separable: the demographic factor - that is, the number and density of population and its distribution by age and sex - is one of the essential determinants of economic and social conditions; demographic change necessarily involves economic and social change, and economic and social changes are never unrelated to the population structure. The family is involved at every point, causally in creating (or arresting) the population change, consequentially in the economic and social changes which follow.

Our study has therefore been of some intricacy. We have come to it as Christians, seeking to understand, first what the facts of our situation are, and secondly what our Christian duty is before them. It is not to be expected that our understanding of either should be unequivocal or complete - we have worked within severe limits of time as well as of human finitude; neither have we felt ourselves obliged or even able to dogmatize, to pronounce facts or changes to be in themselves good or bad, or to declare what "the Church" should do, forbid, or sanction in relation to them. But if, as we must believe, this complex situation is yet one in which God rules, in which it is his children, redeemed by his Son for eternal life with him, who act and suffer, then clearly it is one in which the Christian has to determine his duty to God and God's children - to decide what, in these circumstances, the command to love his neighbour demands of him. We account it an axiom that the Church - each local Church - has a duty, under the Holy Spirit, to study the local situation and so to order its teaching and pastoral ministry and organization that it can perceive and do the will of God in that situation. Our aim in compiling this Report is simply to help the Church in the discharge of this duty in relation to some of the problems confronting the family and society in different parts of the world to-day.

These problems, we have said, are not separable, and the major difficulty is so to act that in satisfying one principle we do not violate another; in meeting one claim, we deny not another equally valid, equally demanding. There is a transcendental element in the family, a point at which it mirrors the Godhead "from whom every family in heaven and earth is named", (1) something therefore "given" of God and so absolute

(1) Eph. 3. 15.

in itself. Yet the cultural patterns in which the family shows itself are many and various; and these patterns have a value in themselves, providing moral, emotional, and economic security in the bonds of kinship and the tacitly regulated interplay of personal life. This family and kindred are interwoven at many points with a wider society - the

tribe, the community, or the nation - another entity enjoying the sanction of the God who is God of "all the nations upon earth". Between these two entities there may well be many conflicting legitimate demands. Family and society together, albeit imperceptibly, create a "population problem": the specific and sacred family act of begetting and bearing puts out of balance local resources and the people who feed and live upon them. With the simultaneous advance of an ethic in which to preserve life is an imperative and of a natural science which makes that task more widely possible, a new conflict of absolutes is introduced: "to save life" is a command of God, even though in the long run obedience to it produces the threat of, or actual, starvation; to "feed the hungry" is another command of God, and one which drives us, in an age of vast technological and economic resources, into a seemingly endless labyrinth of natural and applied sciences and departments of human organization. And so, with the application of technology - with industrialization and the radical transformation of societies which goes with it - in our effort to "feed the hungry" we create a set of lawful claims apparently in conflict with the equally lawful claims of family pattern and personal life. So we come full circle: a problem which is social, demographic, economic, once it is recognized and understood, may confront a man and a woman with personal decisions over the specific act of their married life, that act by which another child may be begotten. It is within this network of conflicting valid claims that we have to work; and if, as we must, we discuss them one by one, their inherent interconnection must not be overlooked.

These are complex problems. Our study is far from complete: first, because our purpose limited us to selected regions, and even within these it seemed wiser to select a few representative areas than to attempt a shallower treatment of them all: secondly, because the evidence, especially on social change, is fragmentary and still in many instances hypothetical. We have tried to make it clear where we are arguing from evidence which we may fairly assume to be conclusive, and where from suggestions or hypotheses still open to challenge or contradiction. We would hope that the same self-discipline may be observed in any discussions which may ensue upon our work.

Population.

Over-population is not a new problem. What is new is the scale of it, and this because of man's discovery and use of the powers entrusted to him by God. New power demands new responsibility. What is the Christian responsibility in this new situation? It is first to try to understand the problem.

Malthus, on the evidence open to him in his day, concluded that, since human beings increase in geometric progression, that is by multiplication, while resources increase only in arithmetic progression, that is by simple addition, population must outstrip resources unless checked. To the "natural" checks of disease, war, misery, and want are added abortion and infanticide to keep the population within its means of subsistence; but population will always increase up to the level of those means, even allowing for the "moral restraint" of a postponement of the age of marriage accompanied by strict sexual continence. But already when Malthus wrote (2) two forces had begun to work which were destined

(2) Essay on Population, 1st ed., 1798; 2nd to 6th editions, revised and enlarged, 1803-26.

to raise the problem to an entirely new scale. The first was industrialization, which, with economic conditions in its native Britain and markets abroad alike wholly favourable to its rapid expansion, so increased resources in the West as to make the Malthusian conclusion appear unduly pessimistic. The second was the invasion made by science upon some at least of the "natural" checks at the behest of an ethic that to save every life that can be saved, to combat disease, to relieve misery and want, is an absolute obligation.

The assault on the mortality rate in Britain and the West did not assume significant proportions until after the increase of resources by industrialization was well under way - and after improved agriculture had made industrialization and urbanization possible; it was carried to its present pitch of effectiveness only by the advance of social and educational services and of nutritional standards which industrialization with its consequent wealth (in the widest sense) made possible. It is of cardinal importance to observe that this same assault on disease and death has been made in the East, and in the Caribbean, before industrialization has really got under way - in advance, therefore, of the means of providing the enlarged and multiplying population with food and the barest necessities of life, to say nothing of the spiritual, educational, and social betterment which make that life worth living. It is this fact which invalidates some of the optimistic analogies with the experience of the West. Education itself, a vital factor in the reduction of population, is hampered and retarded by poverty and the very social conditions which over-population creates. The problem of over-population to-day cannot be left to solve itself; the starvation of millions, the remaining "natural check" (excluding annihilation in an atomic war), is intolerable to the conscience of mankind.

A third force, which Malthus could not foresee, entered into the history of the West to replace, in large measure, the added checks of abortion and infanticide. This was the control of conception made possible by the application of scientific knowledge, giving rise to "family planning" and a reduction of the birth rate ultimately sufficient to match the reduction of the infant mortality rate, and so to stabilize the population, as in England and Wales. The motivation of family planning as the personal decision of each husband and wife involved is complex and requires deeper study; (3) as a social phenomenon,

(3) We would refer to a paper by Dr. John B. Wyon, "Motivation for Family Planning, with Special Reference to Field Studies", presented at the Third All-India Conference on Family Planning, Calcutta, January '57.

however, at least in the West, it appears to be a consequence of social and economic development, (4) characterized by the spread of education,

(4) Not immediately; the immediate effect may be to increase the birth rate, but later the birth rate begins to fall.

the adoption of an urban way of life, and a potentially higher level of living; it then becomes itself a determinant, with important social and demographic consequences of its own. This third force is therefore too important to be ignored in relation to the over-populated countries. Once the means to control conception are established - and the tendency

of research is to make those means far simpler and more generally acceptable than before - then their use becomes, not a matter of personal decision or social attitude only, but also a concern of government and a potential instrument of its social and political policy. The history of several European countries since 1919 demonstrates the effectiveness with which the modern state, of whatever political complexion, can invade, by direct and indirect means, the innermost recesses of family life in the interests of the population policy of the government of the time.

There are, therefore, these three factors in the population problem in relation to which we have to determine our Christian obedience - first, the attempt to increase resources in order to sustain the existing and coming population, by means of economic and social development, with all the consequences which that entails; secondly, the continued reduction of mortality, especially infant mortality, and the continued fight against disease, with the inevitable consequence that thereby the population will multiply still further; and thirdly, the attempt to control this multiplication by means of family planning, fostered in some countries as an instrument of government policy. It appears to us that the first and third of these activities have not had from the Church the enthusiastic approbation enjoyed by the second. It is right, therefore, that in this context we should consider them in turn.

Economic and Industrial Development.

The struggle to deliver peoples from poverty is now world-wide. As an undertaking it is not contingent upon the goodwill of the Church: it is happening; governments are committed to it; vast monetary interests are vested in it; it is bound up with racial, political, nationalistic, and other ideologies which may be entirely irrelevant to it, often to its own hindrance; it is both pawn and king on the chessboard of diplomacy. Yet the Church must have a part in it; first, to declare it to be in principle God's work; secondly, because it is an inescapable fact in the lives of millions of God's people, fraught with enormous consequence for good or ill, an experience of life into which the Church must enter if it is to be true to its mission in the theology of the Incarnation.

In the supposedly Christian West the first era of industrialization left scars which have scarcely healed in time for the second era which is now upon us, because basic human needs were ignored or, where considered, misunderstood. The great social surveys did not begin until the crowded industrial areas had taken shape; people had been swept from a rural into an urban and industrial way of life without any study of what effect so radical a change might have upon them; and the Church, albeit late but with magnificent enterprise, hastily extended to the towns its ancient, essentially rural, parochial pattern to overtake them. But the Church has never yet caught up: social service, the healing of consequential ills, is one duty, in which the Church has expended loving care; it is no substitute for the other, for social study and social integration - the shaping of community according to human needs and human destiny in the Kingdom of God. It is this second duty which we conceive to be the vocation of the Church wherever there is social change to-day. Where the Church is incarnate in the life of man it has the opportunity of helping to shape the new societies from or near the beginning, of lessening the toll which rapid change otherwise will take

in human suffering, in the distortion of family and community life, and in multiplying the occasions of sin. The other duty, the healing service, will continue with new effectiveness. But two conditions of both are participation in life, and study.

We have anticipated several steps in our argument in order to establish the concern which we feel, that the Church should nowhere regard economic development - the attempt to give people more food, more material things and the opportunity to enjoy them, with less toil, less sheer drudgery in keeping alive - either as evil and mischievous in itself, or as an inevitable "high level" enterprise in which the Church has no part but to grieve for the disruption of the familiar scene, and to labour among the remnant as before.

India, for example, where the deaths of children under 5 equal or exceed the deaths at all ages from 5 to 54, where the expectation of life is even now only 39 years, where population is even so increasing at four and a half to five millions a year, adding yearly to the unemployed and under-employed, and to the numbers trying to live off holdings already too small- India has come to the end of one Five Year Plan, aimed at increasing by irrigation the land available for agriculture, and by raising the yield of land by better farming. It has embarked on a second, in which industrialization will play an increasing part. But the very shackles of the situation will keep the wheels slow: India must forego the economic advantages of large-scale, centralized manufacture in order to preserve the village industries and such employment and social satisfaction as they afford; (5) foreign currency, necessary for the import of capital

(5) Compare China: "So vast is the population ... that the Chinese cannot afford to mechanize, for the simple reason that unemployment on an unprecedented scale would result. Mechanization must wait until the new industries can absorb the teeming peasantry. In every part of China today you see tens of thousands of labourers at work with no instrument more complicated than a couple of baskets dangling from a bamboo pole. They are building China with the methods used for building the pyramids." (The Times, 2 Oct. 1957).

goods, has to be diverted to the import of even more precious food. India's rulers are hobbled in their race with the tide of population growth; and they cannot go at even the pace they have planned without external aid.

The picture in the West Indies is more sombre still; the problems are, if anything, more acute, the remedies more elusive. Here density is added to fecundity: the islands are small, with little room for their inhabitants to support life. There is but a limited demand for what little the territory can export, and therefore a limit to what it can earn to meet the cost of improving its agriculture, to capitalize industries, or to raise purchasing power. The islands have few attractions for industrialists from abroad - except as holiday resorts. Those who write with knowledge of the economic possibilities of the West Indies do so in tones of anxious searching, with an undercurrent of despair. We read the reports of an impressive procession of expert commissions and advisers, each disappointed in the hope that those before were wrong: there is no note of optimism that can be struck. In economic terms the problems of the Caribbean are insoluble from within;

they are probably insoluble still with external aid, unless at the same time revolutionary changes occur in the outlook of the masses of the people.

Egypt presents a wholly different challenge to the Christian conscience. It is not a member of the British Commonwealth, so it has no claim upon Commonwealth resources; its political policies excite no sympathy for it in the United States of America and the monetary sources so largely in American control. Yet it must grow or import more food to feed its multiplying population. It cannot irrigate extensively without external aid; it cannot trade without export goods. It remains a "test case", trying the prudence and the humanity of the West precisely because it has no title to Western aid; a case of conscience for Christian statesmanship.

The materially more advanced countries of the world have a duty to help the under-developed countries in their economic and social development - a duty all the more insistent where there are population pressures like those which we have described. "Under-developed" is a relative term, but it applies to many independent nations as well as to Colonial territories. For the latter there is a clear responsibility (confirmed in the United Nations Charter) falling upon their respective metropolitan countries, each of which has its own methods of operation. Much excellent work is already being done in this way, and we hope that as national resources permit (even at some sacrifice to progress in the already much higher standards of living at home) it will be expanded and accelerated.

Such territories, as well as the independent nations, can also draw upon the services of the various international agencies, the International Monetary Fund, the World Health Organization, and the rest, in their respective fields. These agencies themselves depend mainly on the wealthier nations for their finances and the expert services which money represents.

It is customary to think of assistance to under-developed countries in terms of finance for capital development or of expert assistance in development plans and projects - perhaps too much in terms of the second, when the more urgent need is for the first. (6) The wealthier nations

(6) Cf. Professor P.M.S. Blackett, F.R.S., in his presidential address to the British Association, 5 Sept. 1957: "Admirable as many of the schemes of technical aid have been, particularly those in education, medicine and agriculture, the sending of experts to poor countries without the capital to carry out their plans could be as irritating as to send a trained cook to a family unable to pay the baker. Unless followed up by massive financial aid, some of the West's present aid programme may yet merit the war-time wisecrack of 'offering all aid short of help'." (The Listener, 5 Sept. 1957, p. 332).

with diversified economies could make a perhaps even more important contribution by adopting liberal trade and fiscal policies which permit the under-developed countries - whose economic potentialities are often restricted by nature to a small range of products - to develop those commodities which they are specially suited to produce, and to market them in other countries at sufficiently rewarding prices with the minimum of trade restrictions. Prosperity through trade is better for economic,

social, and moral stability than artificial aid.

We would suggest also that when financial assistance is given, it should be directed towards promoting the wealth of the recipient country by economic development or scientific research, or by development work in the social services such as the building of schools, improved housing, or the eradication of disease. This is preferable to the external subsidizing of recurrent services, which, in our view, is not consistent with self-government in any real sense. In the long run, the heavy recurrent costs of an improved standard of administration and social services can only be financed from the taxable wealth of the country itself. It is in measures to increase that wealth that the materially advanced countries can make their most useful contribution.

If the duty which we have stated be a valid one, and if the policies sketched in the last four paragraphs be sound, then Christians who are also citizens of the materially advanced countries have a clear field in which to interpret the divine precept, to give to those in need. They ought, in our view, to use every influence to secure such sacrifices in their nation's relatively high standard of living as may make some contribution at least towards meeting the needs of the under-developed countries; (7) they ought themselves to remain sensitive to a distinction

(7) Cf. Blackett, loc. cit. Of the £1,000 m. a year needed as a free gift or as long term loans "Britain would pay £150 m. a year, and this would postpone by less than a year the expected rise of 50 per cent in British living standards over the next quarter of a century ... With nations, as with individuals, the ultimate hypocrisy of the rich is to preach the virtue of poverty to the poor."

between the necessities of an already ample life, and the luxuries which are continually attaching to it, and to commend this distinction to their nation. They ought to resist the erection of prohibitive tariff and other barriers by which their own national economy is protected at the expense of the much more precarious economies of countries which must market their few commodities in order to live. They ought to exercise a liberalizing influence on public opinion, disposing it towards accepting a concern for other peoples in need, and against inverted national or sectional self-interest; inculcating sympathy with the sensitiveness of the communities which they seek to help, their self-respect and desire for autonomy, and their suspicion of gifts trailing political "strings".

Christians in the "new" nations of Asia, Africa, and the Levant have a similar task in the face of combative nationalisms of their own. Communities and nations which need assistance, and seek it, must endeavour to overcome the hostility and suspicion that are "natural" even in an individual to whom good is done. With persons who have been brought together in this way we have learned to deal through a better understanding of the relationship in which they stand; deeper meanings of the word "charity" have been made apparent to us, and have influenced our conduct. Between communities or nations the problems of giving and receiving are much greater. The recipient must learn to overcome the brash self-assertiveness, associated with feelings of inferiority, which is greatly reinforced when consciousness of race or colour intervenes. Tensions between "advanced" and "backward" have also to be overcome within communities as well as between them. Difficulties arising in this way require much more understanding and spiritual insight than we possess at

the moment if adequate solutions are to be found for them.

The opportunities open to the Church in lands where this economic development is taking place will be discussed below when we consider social change. Our purpose so far has been to examine the economic factor in the population problem. We are convinced that agricultural and industrial development must take place as rapidly as circumstances permit; that it must command the most generous aid from countries already materially advanced; and, on the best evidence that we could find, that even so there are countries, inhabited by many millions of people, in which no programme of development yet foreseeable can hope by itself to win the race with population multiplying at its present rate. Even allowing for the application of atomic energy to industrialization, to irrigation - even, for example, to the creation of artificial lakes for stocking with fish, a most prolific form of food - this pessimistic conclusion is the only one to which responsibly we can come. It is with this in mind that we turn to the remaining two factors in the population problem, the reduction of mortality and the reduction of fertility.

The Reduction of Mortality.

The science and skill which have already in the West changed the death of an infant from a common to a rare occurrence, are now advancing all across the world, with results which the figures in our papers tell, exciting wonder and grateful admiration. So do the measures which combat epidemics and disease, which lessen sickness and suffering, enriching and prolonging life. That far more can yet be done is manifest: the infant mortality rate in Britain is 26.5 per thousand; in India it is about 200. But every child kept alive is a potential parent. So the dense populations are also young populations, with an expectation of life and prolific parenthood before them such as their fathers hardly dreamed of. The Church has from the first accepted the care and healing of the sick as its privilege; "medical missions" were the spearhead of the great expansion of the Church in the Victorian era and after. Medicine and every social philosophy based on the sacredness of human life and personality conspire to save life where it can be saved, and to preserve and enrich it to the limit of possibility. It is, therefore, the application of modern science in obedience to Christian and what we might call Hippocratic ethics which has created the problem of over-population as we know it in the world to-day.

Can we now seriously consider a halt in this endeavour? Ought we still to strive to keep more babies alive, knowing that every success brings nearer the possibility that they may face starvation and social disaster in their lifetime? Serious consideration was given to this dilemma at the meeting of the British Association in 1952, reflecting the anxiety and integrity of our leading scientists: it is no fanciful question. For ourselves, we cannot contemplate any cessation of this work. We regard the obligation as absolute, and one to be discharged in the faith that to obedient men, humbly seeking the truth and a way, God will reveal the means to avert the predicted consequence. In our view the Church must co-operate as fully as ever before in making available the boons of medical and social care wherever there is need of them.

Family Planning.

We come, therefore, to the third factor in the population problem, the possibility of controlling the multiplication of population by limiting conception and so reducing the number of children born. Family planning is another force in the contemporary world, like economic development, which is gathering momentum and will do so increasingly, however the Church may regard it. In the West it is the only possible explanation of the stabilized or declining birth rates in countries which have drastically reduced their death rates, and in particular their infant mortality rates. The facts convince us that there is no more than a slight difference of degree in the acceptance of family planning between Roman Catholics and Protestants; (8) it has been observed in the United Kingdom, in the

(8) It should be pointed out that there may be differences of method as between one community and another, for the postponement of marriage and the renunciation of marriage altogether may be relied on as well as contraception or other methods. These courses raise further problems. The Irish Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems, for instance, was of the opinion that "A profoundly adverse effect on the psychology of the people must be produced where so many do not marry at all or else postpone marriage to ages higher than are customary elsewhere or are desirable and natural. There is something gravely wrong in a community where there is such a widespread frustration of natural expectation, and in our considered view the low marriage rate is one of our two great population problems." (Report, 1954, para. 163 and Tables 51 and 54).

Irish Republic, and in Western Germany, as indeed in the U.S.A. and Europe generally, that occupation is more of a determinant of family size than is religion: the difference of family size between occupational groups in the same region cuts across the difference of religious denomination. From Europe and America the practice is spreading to wherever conditions - primarily human conditions, the degree of sophistication, and so on - permit its adoption, and there is a determination to limit family size. It is important to observe that what began, under the name of "birth control", with an entirely negative purpose of limiting conception, has now developed an equally important positive side, in the study and remedying of sub-fertility, enabling many who would otherwise be childless to beget and bear children. The expression "family planning" therefore represents an extension of the responsible use of science into the realm of procreation in the immediate interest of the family and the more remote but no less real interest of society at large.

In the West the movement has thus established itself with little regard for ecclesiastical pronouncement on the use of contraceptives, which are often, though not necessarily, involved in family planning. The resolutions of the Lambeth Conferences of 1908 and 1920 denounced contraception outright; that of 1930, carried by a three-to-one majority, was grudgingly permissive. (9) Elsewhere, Christians now responsibly

(9) 1908, Resolutions 41, 43; 1920, Resolution 68; 1930, Resolution 15.

involved in the beginning of the movement are anxious for its consideration in principle and for a moral decision by the Church. We have followed with deep interest some of the discussions which have been taking place in the Province of India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon and within the Christian Medical Association of India. We have observed the desire

expressed there by Christian medical opinion for the spreading, with the co-operation of the Church, of the knowledge of methods of family planning as an alternative to the very widespread and ill-considered resort to sterilization and induced abortion. In the ensuing Synodical Discussion great care was taken to ascertain the relevant facts, and to bring to bear on them the insights of moral theology; there has been consultation with the Church in other provinces, in order to give the local Church the benefit of a consensus fidelium on the subject, if one there be. We do not know, at the time of our writing our Report, the outcome of these discussions; but we would warmly commend, if we may do so without presumption, this method of procedure: it is, in our view, typical of the way in which a Church ought, in full consultation with other workers and specialists involved, to study, and form its mind, and frame its action, upon problems of local importance. The Medical Consultative Committee of The Commission of the Churches on International Affairs emphasized recently the necessity for the Churches to "intervene" to give religious sanction to responsible family limitation in the face of this world problem. (10)

(10) Medical Bulletin No. 1, January 1957.

We have considered very carefully what we ought to say in the face of these facts, having within our view the very different conditions facing Christians in different regions of the world. We could hardly be expected to enunciate a formula which could be applied to them all. The theologians among us have prepared a paper, setting out three considerations of the use of contraceptives, by means of which much, though not all, family planning is achieved. We observe that they conclude that:

> In spite of the manifest divergences between these three treatments of the question, there is a meeting point of practical importance in the judgement that a conscientious decision to use contraceptives would in certain circumstances be justified.

At the same time we are bound to record the existence of thoughtful opinion, both clerical and lay, in the Church of England which would go much further than this properly cautious theological conclusion, in a positive acceptance of the use of contraceptives within Christian marriage and family life.

Those who hold this opinion affirm very positively the wholeness, the one-ness of marriage, the expression of married love in coition, and the integrity of the family with children growing up within it. They would deny equally strongly that the use of contraceptives is an attempt to extract selfish pleasure out of the man-woman relationship at the expense of the duty and obligations of parenthood. Within the married partnership of a responsible, freely consenting man and woman, coition is part of the marriage, enhancing its unity and its harmony; children, as the outcome of the marriage, themselves also in turn enhance the unity and the harmony; the marriage, the metaphysical unity, is the controlling concept between the coition and the children, and as such we may liken it to a reservoir which is the centre of control between the inflowing mountain streams and the outflow of hydraulic or electric power. The use of contraceptives, on this view, enables the marriage to be enriched with consequent benefit to the family, and the demand of this interpretation

is not less responsibility but more. It is in terms like these that Christian men and women, earnestly seeking to fulfil the will of God for them in relation to the circumstances of their life, justify, to those who ask, the use of contraceptives within Christian marriage. (They would perhaps add that between themselves this decision has passed beyond the need of conscious justification.) It may be said that their contention cannot be overthrown unless we are prepared to maintain that the nature of coition is "given" in every particular and for ever, in all its physical and metaphysical aspects, and so placed outside the realm of human decision.

The more we understand of our procreative powers, the more responsible we are for the way in which we use them. The price of this generation's knowledge is therefore a heavier burden of responsibility. Christian parents who participate in that knowledge, whether they accept contraception or not, cannot but feel obliged to "space" and "plan" their families according to their understanding of themselves, of the well-being of their children, and of the needs of the society of which they are part. To produce children without regard to consequences is to use procreative power irresponsibly, the more so when there is involved the imposition of one partner's will upon the other. If our conscience will not tolerate, when we know how to prevent it, a torrent of infant deaths, no more should we, with the knowledge we have, encourage an ungoverned spate of unwanted births. If fatalism has given place to upholding the sanctity of life for the living, should it not yield also to a responsibility for those whom we cause to be born?

So we may bring together our consideration of the three aspects of the population problem. If those whose duty it is to know declare that there are parts of the world where, even given all the economic development possible in the time, resources cannot keep pace with human need if population continues to multiply at its present rate, we can find no ground on which responsibly to contradict them. We find nothing Christian in the suggestion that the so-called "natural checks" should be left to exercise their own restraint upon population - that men and women and infants should be left to die, that pestilence should walk unchecked, or war or abortion take their toll. If, therefore, governments resolve that it is their duty to encourage (but not to enforce) the adoption of family planning in conjunction with their best endeavours to raise the level of living in other ways, we cannot say that Christians ought to withhold their support. How, indeed, could we say that? The catastrophe of which Malthus warned the West has been averted here by two factors - by industrialization, which is now apparently to take vast new strides, and by family limitation which is now largely accepted in all levels of society irrespective of religious profession. These two factors do not yet operate in the under-developed areas of the world - the remaining four-fifths of it; therefore the gap between the developed and the under-developed is widening rapidly. (11) To "him that hath"

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(11) "In addition to maintaining its existing wealth, the western world is saving and investing productively some 10 per cent of its income of £300 a year a head: that is, some £30 a year is being invested in additional plant and machinery to create more wealth. The pre-industrial countries of Asia have only about £20 a year to live on, that is, for both consumption and production goods. The West is thus saving more than the East is spending on everything. No wonder that the gap in wealth between the West and Asia is steadily widening!" Blackett, loc. cit.

is being given, and from "him that hath not" is being taken away even that which he hath, because he is reproducing himself more rapidly than forces can be marshalled in his environment which will enable his progeny to be fed.

Before such an aggravation of the world situation the Christian Church cannot remain detached and unmoved. It would be presumptuous for the Church in the West, which cannot look with complacency on the way in which it has guided or failed to guide its people in these matters, to seek to inhibit by religious sanction one of the two means, economic expansion and family limitation, by which under-developed areas may be able to save themselves from disaster. The Churches in the regions where the issues are both urgent and new have the opportunity to show themselves wiser in their generation, and to lead their people, through a deeper understanding of sex, marriage, and the family, of the State and of society, to undertake new responsibilities in fuller dependence upon God.

Social Change.

We have reserved from our discussion of the population problem above a fuller treatment of the vocation of the Church in lands where industrial and economic development are taking place, in order to consider it in a wider context of social change - for in many regions social change is taking place unconnected with industrialization. We have suggested that the Church in the West, despite its heroic record of money and pastoral zeal outpoured, never overtook the first industrial revolution because it set out too late and because it had no means of understanding the complexity of the change in which it was involved. To-day, as a second industrial revolution gathers speed, the Church has another opportunity: it need not, if it will but run, be left behind; and it has at hand the means of study, if it will but run in harness with those whose profession is to observe objectively what is happening in society. In service, too, the Church has potential allies as never before in an age when governments and government-sponsored international agencies have an ethical as well as a political interest in social and educational betterment and are contributing money and trained men and women towards it.

Those who know most about Western society to-day tell us how little is really known about the effect of present working conditions on human behaviour, and on family life in particular. They can write with some assurance of the influences of the first industrialization - the effects of which can still be traced in our pattern of family life, and which still provide many of the casualties in the social worker's care. On the new situation, however, which developed with widespread electrification in the 1930s, and which is advancing now under the name of "automation", they insist that they can but state hypotheses; they observe and deduce, but they do not claim to know. (12) If truth be a condition of prophecy,

(12) See Richard M. Titmuss, "Industrialization and the Family", a paper delivered in plenary session at the International Conference of Social Work, Munich, 1956. The quotation immediately following is drawn from this source.

a like modesty would well adorn the Church: its utterances would gain thereby in effectiveness what they may lose sometimes in effect. At all events, we are hardly in a position to offer countries coming new to this

enterprise lessons and warnings from our older experience: we are only now beginning to formulate what those lessons are. Even if, as one of our number has written, we can communicate principles of action,

> even here our motives in desiring to find and pass on the lessons of experience must have that quality of disinterested-attachment on which empires, either of a material or ideological kind, are assuredly not built.

The Church may reasonably be expected, however, to challenge society to examine its goals, and to determine what must at all costs be preserved and what may be put in jeopardy in the planning of social change: and where, on the best available evidence, the family is threatened with more than it can be expected to bear, the Church has a duty to say so, (13)

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(13) Cf. the Bishop of Sheffield, in a House of Lords debate on the family: "Then, as we all know, there are industrial pressures, some due to the nature of the industry and some in the interests of efficient production, which bear hardly on the family. Full employment and good wages are, of course, an immense boon and blessing; but the price is high if it means a great increase in shift work and in the demand for mobility of labour. The rootlessness of urban industrial populations is a social evil, and incidentally it is somewhat inimical to the life of the Churches. Industry affects social life powerfully. Whilst someone has said that a family may be more corrupted by coddling than by difficulties, we may ask industry in framing its economic policies to have thought for the consequence of those policies upon the life of the family and community, and to be prepared sometimes to sacrifice, for a short length of time, a little economic efficiency in order to maintain the stability of the family as a unit." (Hansard: Lords. vol. 182 (Apr. to June 1953), p. 662.)

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accepting that in so doing it commits itself also to the search for a remedy.

We do not envisage the problem as one of exclusive choice - social change <u>or</u> the family; the reality of the situation is social change <u>and</u> the family, where some changes, some conditions of working life, make Christian family life more difficult, temporarily or with a threat of permanence, and others strengthen it, at least for a time. How do we receive a mixed blessing? "Automation" and the highly developed industrial processes of the West leave work-people with more leisure and more reserves of physical energy - a potential good, inviting all sorts of creative uses for the time and energy set free; they may also require shift-working, even over week-ends, with the corollary that a Christian family may not always be free to worship or sit at table or meet together on Sunday - a potential ill, and one disturbing to the Christian conscience. Is the Church to oppose the development, renouncing the good because of the ill? Or is the Church, for the sake of the good, to strengthen its people for Christian living in new conditions with new demands for personal decision? It is to be remembered that many Christians, those by whom the world's work was done, had to wait for Constantine to give them Sunday as a holy day, free from work; and that modern society has for long required work from some on Sundays - shiftwork from railwaymen and others in the public services, work on any or every Sunday from farmers, doctors, nurses, and many more, whose strength either of churchmanship or of family life has not been noticeably the less. At what point does extension of incidence

change an ill from one to be borne to one to be opposed? It is in situations like these that we perceive the danger of assuming that one phase of Christian culture has an eternal validity.

Sociologists are interesting themselves more deeply in the interplay of work and home as influences upon people's lives. "Industrial man" is also a "family man": neither he nor his welfare can be studied as though his working life were all his life. Professor R.M. Titmuss has pointed to

> differences in the norms of behaviour expected of the worker in the factory and of the same worker (though in other of his roles as husband and father) in his home and in the community. (14)

(14) Op. cit.

In an industrial society, he suggests, the manual worker is given less and less room for self-determination: technology, the "rationalization of production", the increasing independence and omni-competence of the machine, all tend to give him a sense of "irregularity and uncertainty in status and skill". The contemporary idea of "the good father", however, requires him to plan, provide, nurture his family to maturity in a stable home, and so on - all requiring of him the attributes denied him in his daily work. The loss of status attached to skill when the machine replaces skill in a given process appears to be important in several ways. Though both the total number of workers and the proportion of skilled workers employed in the factory concerned may be increased as a result, it may nevertheless leave a residue of manual or "process" workers who are in a sense left behind by the general advance of industrial technology, with even less of a way of promotion ahead of them comparable with that open to the craftsmen employed in the same shop. But whether these changes are likely to be typical of technological developments in the next decade is very much in doubt. The emphasis in the work of an operative controlling an automatic process will be on responsibility, for vigilance and speed and accuracy of response will be of the first importance. Feelings of subjection to the machine may thus give way to one of pride in mastery over it. The worker's increased responsibility may indeed lead him to become a more active citizen. But, on the other hand, if his status is lowered, and his future looks no different from, and no more rewarding to him, than the past, he may shirk responsibility both in the factory and in the world outside.

There is no final opinion that can be expressed in this matter. The effects of changes in productive techniques and industrial organization upon a man's position in his own home, among his own children, have indeed still to be understood: will the man without status at work feel that he has no status either at home or among his neighbours? Will he be submissive therefore at home, or authoritarian in compensation? We do not offer answers to these questions; but the fact that the sociologist asks them indicates to us what forces may be pulling a man this way and that in the inter-relation of his work and his home in an industrial society. Where human relationships like these are in question the Church should be supremely concerned. Does the fellowship of the local Church enable this man "to become himself" in a way that he cannot at work? Has the Church in an industrial area a clergyman or social worker capable of understanding the social strains of this divided life, and so of helping

the family to ride above them at a time of threatened breakdown? Has this life any significance for Church worship, the times and duration of service, the idiom of liturgy, sermon, and instruction, the content and practice of prayer, public and private? Does it demand a re-thinking of Christian education, the development of a special syllabus, for example, for boys and girls approaching the day of their first going to work? Are we preparing them adequately for the moral decisions which they may have to make as workers, so different from those of home and school?

Not only our work but also our living is now caught up in change. Is the Church really abreast of the changes in where and how people are living to-day? There are areas at the centre of industrial and commercial cities apparently socially derelict, destitute of any social bond, where parochial clergymen spend themselves utterly, supported if at all by the familiar voluntary parochial team, but needing desperately the help which only trained social workers could give. There are, on the fringe of the cities, the new estates and satellite towns, artificially created, where families live often far from kindred and place of work, where the Church is striving to build a Christian community from the beginning - an attempt which is surely ripe by this time for a thorough, comparative survey of the highest academic competence. Further out are the villages and villas, to which those who can afford to do so repair daily when their work in the city is done, to which they "belong" in only a limited sense, and from which they could uproot themselves at will. Elsewhere, it is true, as in some of the textile towns and, as a recent survey shows, in some London boroughs, there is a stronger sense of neighbourhood and "belonging", based upon a network of kindred and acquaintance which has been many decades in growing. If, as we believe to be likely, the family is strengthened and supported in many ways by such a sense of community, then society - and the Church within it - must give much more serious attention to the factors contributing to community, and seek to arrest the present tendencies towards urban disintegration.

If we have begun with the industrial society of the West, it is only because it is the one in which we live, not because the problems of social change in Africa, India, Asia, the Caribbean, and South America are less crucial. There they are more obvious and pressing, because of the pace of social change and because of the wide territorial areas which may be involved. But we must emphasize that industrialization and economic development are not the only causes of social change. Christianity itself has been a potent disruptive force, undermining the authority of fear, breaking into established family and tribal structures, pronouncing new value judgements upon them - as, for instance, upon polygamy, which has social and economic aspects as well as the moral and theological - and imposing new structures, overlaying a new culture, upon the old. (How far the new remains as an insecure veneer upon the old, or how far it is yet rooted in place of the old, remains yet to be seen). Education, whether "westernized" or not, is itself a disruptive force: by enlarging men's apprehension of what is elsewhere, and of what can be where they are, it leads to discontent and to a determined aspiration towards a "better life". The old charge against Christian missions, that they "make the natives discontented", was factually true though morally obtuse. If the Gospel be true, this we had to do: and if the Gospel be true, we are equally bound to the consequence. The education of women and girls, which, relatively speaking, has only just begun, is probably the most disruptive force of all in matters of family life: new

attitudes towards marriage, towards motherhood, towards children, towards marital and family love - and a new understanding of a vocation for the unmarried - are all bound to emerge as women experience the liberation which we call knowledge.

That this is happening we know, among Moslems and Hindus as well as Christians; and standards which may be called vaguely "western" are sometimes being adopted without specific religious foundation, and without any religious power to meet the disruption which they cause. Where marriage has traditionally been an alliance of families more than a union of persons, there are strong family sanctions, social and economic, to hold the weak marriage together; this is true of those parts of Africa where the bride-price is paid, and of Hindu societies where marriages are "arranged" and a dowry paid. Substitute for this the marriage of choice, in which the family interest is diminished, over-ridden, or ignored, where the bride-price is either fictitious or paid out of the bridegroom's earnings, not from his family's cattle, and the marriage is left without these supporting bonds. If there be no other bond - an inward bond of religious faith or of lasting love, or an outward social bond, girded about by a community which is a fellowship, which cares - then that marriage is unlikely to last; and many are the pitfalls, moral and social, which await the man and woman as they drift apart, perhaps in a friendless city or location far away from the tribal solidarity in which they were reared. (15)

(15) The evidence for Africa is collected in Survey of African Marriage and Family Life, ed. Arthur Phillips, published for the International African Institute by Oxford University Press, 1953. cf. J.C. Carothers, The Psychology of Mau Mau, Nairobi, 1954, and J.V. Taylor, Christianity and Politics in Africa, Penguin, 1957. For Ceylon see T.L. Green, 'Changes in the Family in Ceylon Consequent upon Education and Social Contacts', in Familles dans le Monde, Paris, Dec. 1956.

That many are disturbed by the changes which they see is emphasized by the marked revulsion from change which erupts pictorially from time to time. The reversion abroad from European dress to native costume, the studied cultivation of regional languages, as Flemish, or Irish, or Welsh, against the cosmopolitan, the militancy of a regional culture, and the intense opposition advanced in its name to, for example, the flooding of a Welsh valley to provide water for Liverpool's industries - even the outbreak of the Mau Mau rebellion - these are different manifestations of the same resistance to a change which is, in the nature of things, irresistible, the movement towards one world of mutual awareness and dependence. The world will not run so headlong into change that it is careless of what is to be preserved.

Yet it must change: there are regions into which industry must come if their people are to survive; economic change, urban development and the consequent disruption of the village and tribal way of life must come. Education is both demanded and given by governments and international agencies as well as by the Christian Church. What duty does the Church owe to its people in such situations? How can it transform its deep pastoral concern into effective action in these new fields? Has it in itself the resources with which to integrate the new "dispersion", to create community where else there is but conglomeration? Can it create to-day in a technological age what its fathers built of old, a Christendom,

a culture in which men and women can affirm their work and their family and social life to be their Christian life, and can offer its fruits in worship? Or must it retreat from this age, become a Church of the desert - of the solitary, or of the gathered, withdrawn, stockaded community - and deny that daily toil has any Christian relevance at all? For ourselves, we know but one answer: the Church of the Incarnate Lord must not withdraw; it must participate in life, all of it, and be where men are. The lump must still be leavened, if it is to rise.

We have asked ourselves earnestly what this participation demands of the Church in these many different situations. The first demand, we believe, is one of conviction: the Church has to convince itself theologically of what its witness requires of it, what the will of God is for men and women in their families, in work, in society, in the nation and race. Without theological conviction, action would be half-hearted, or misdirected, or both. The Church, then, is called again to study: not, we suggest, to study in the abstract, but to study its theology in relation to the things that are - the "given" by revelation together with the "given" by situation. (16) In such study there is an essential

(16) Cf. A. R. Vidler, Christian Belief and this World, S.C.M. Press, 1956.

element of exchange, of generative conversation between those with knowledge in different professions. We believe that a Church which hopes to make any impact in its local situation must set its theologians and its administrators to work with the men and women of integrity (be they Christians or not) engaged locally in academic study, field research, or administration or community service; in order, first to understand what the situation really is, and then to order Church life and activity within it accordingly. We regard such an exchange as essential, not only for this immediate, "practical" outcome, but also as the only way to lay the foundations of a contemporary Christian culture. Theology activates society, we believe, when it is embodied in cultural forms: medieval Christendom became what it was because theology found an expression, not only in the liturgical, but also in the social and economic, life of men; it broke when theology became circumscribed, partly by authority, partly by its own logic, and so unable any longer to admit other aspects of knowledge and truth. That danger is present to Christians in every age. We would therefore recommend, as the means whereby in our own day a Christian culture may be developed, that the Church should encourage co-operative work on specific problems between those who are specialists working within the different disciplines of their diverse fields. (17)

(17) Cf. a speech by the Bishop of Chichester (Dr. Bell) in the Convocation of Canterbury, 2 October 1957.

Cathedral foundations in particular (which in the past were the nurseries of schools and hence sometimes of universities) might well take the initiative in fostering such co-operation, and thus again offer a more ample and reasonable service to God and men.

An integration which begins thus at the centre - say in the Cathedral and University City, or in the diocesan office and government office - must grow also further afield. Those who know the under-developed countries, and those concerned with their advancement, assure us that to

put capital into industrial and economic development without investing correspondingly in the social and educational services would not be simply to waste money; it would be to put it to dangerous use: for without tremendous social care, the social hurt of industrialization would be appalling. There is evidence enough already, at home and abroad, that this affirmation is true. Moreover, there is no reason to suppose that the economic and social plans which are being prepared in the less developed countries can be put into effect - or ever completed - unless great reserves of spiritual energy can be drawn on to provide the planning process with motive power. Without energy of this kind, the inhabitants of such countries may share with the adherents of the Cargo Cult of the South Seas an angry sense of deprivation when the commodities they lack are not made freely available to them by wealthier nations, coupled with a determination not to be "ordered around" any longer by "foreigners". It is for this reason that the foundations of economic planning must be laid in properly conceived social development schemes. Put bluntly, the urge to work is stillborn in a man who cannot expect that life has much to offer him in the future; if he cannot look ahead with confidence, he tends naturally to live in the present, if not in the past. The administrative problem may, indeed, be resolved in the last analysis into one of generating new energies and making new opportunities available. This is outwardly a social problem, but its core is spiritual, and it exists as a challenge to all Christian men and women.

Even the social and educational services as we know them, however, require people as well as money, the right men and women, with character, integrity, and vocation, and with the right training. We believe it to be a function of the Church to produce these men and women, and to set before them as a high vocation the study and service of society in this way, at home and abroad.

> The Christians of the West have a solemn obligation to use their influence to ensure that men and women from the West shall go out to serve the world which they no longer rule. Service will no doubt call for judicious capital investment. But fundamentally it calls for something far deeper and more important - personal involvement by persons in the local situation, so that the experience of the "haves" can be mediated to the "have-nots" by processes which are organic to the local situation and not alien to it. (18)

(18) C.M.S. Newsletter, No. 193, April 1957, p. 7.

We believe that the Church must take more trained social scientists and social workers into its own service, as well as co-operating fully with those in the employ of government and local authorities and of voluntary organizations.

The acceptance of this proposition in principle will raise many questions of practical application. The Church of England would need to reconsider its whole policy in the training and use of lay people, especially of women, in church work. It would have to engage in close consultation with the university departments of social studies over the selection of students and their training. It would reassess the curriculum of its theological colleges, to see whether an introduction to "pastoralia" which did not convey some understanding of, so to speak,

"the pastoral scene" could be considered adequate at all. (The continued use of the pastoral idiom may, indeed, blind us to the social realities of contemporary life.) If the Church came to accept the need of a social worker on the staff of the large industrial parish, or attached to a group of parishes, diocesan and parochial organization and finance would require adjustment accordingly. The fostering of vocations to this sort of ministry will call for more informed and imaginative preaching and teaching where Christian character is formed and ideals are seen, in the parish church, the youth fellowship, the school and college chapel, and the university student bodies. The task is formidable, but in our view the need is paramount and it must be met.

The pitch of vocation must be high. Overseas, we are told, until society understands the place of the unmarried woman within it, the Church and the social services need very much the help of unmarried women from abroad, especially for the education and advancement of women and girls. But the higher rate and lower age of marriage, in Britain at least, with its corollary that there will be steadily fewer unmarried women in our midst and a consequent strain upon our own social services, means that without a high pitch of Christian vocation Britain will not send out what the Church and society overseas most require. Our theology and our preaching, then, are confronted with this dual task - to proclaim a positive doctrine of marriage and the family, and, at the same time, a positive vocation to a service which may demand their renunciation; yet a renunciation which is also an affirmation of gender, a consecration of characteristic "manhood" or "womanhood" to the service of others and the glory of God.

The vocation to serve thus in the building up of a community and the integrating of family life within it is not to the individual only but also to the congregation. The disintegration of once-established cultures and communities is as real in some of the cities of England as in regions, shall we say, of Africa; here, as there, are newly-populated areas which cannot be called "communities" because no power on earth seems capable of generating a recognizable community life in them for very long. Many who once had great faith in the "community centre" movement now speak sadly of the futility of trying to "bring people together" with no defined purpose or reason. The local Church is a potential nucleus of community: common prayer, a common participation in the sacraments, common aims, a common language and way of life - all this ought to produce a community, and does. But does it grow outwards? We cannot rest content if it stops with the faithful congregation. Theologically all human relationship and life in community are very much the Church's business. Therefore this way of "participation in life", the non-church life of the local people, must be the task of the Christian congregation. Reports from the few places where this is already realized show that a Church which genuinely sets out to permeate the local life by means of lay activity, geared to the real social needs of the place, does exert a cohesive force, laying the foundations of community. The prerequisite of such work is leadership - a ministering team, lay as well as clerical, appropriate to the locality.

The Church's first conquest of Europe was accomplished because the ecclesiastical organization developed step by step with the civilization - first the city diocese; then the staffed "mission" church at strategic

points on routes or central for regions; then the parish, its shape economically determined (the parish was the area from which a Church took its tithe) and exactly suited to the manorial and municipal society of the day; then the supplementary ministries of friaries, guilds, and fraternities. Even the withdrawals from the general pattern, the monasteries of various sorts from the Celtic to the Cistercian, were cradles of a Christian community and culture, precisely because they were so exactly adapted to the social needs and systems of their several generations. The demand on the Church is no less to-day - to adapt the organization of its ministry closely to the local and contemporary patterns of society. Without this adaptation there can be no identification; without identification, no leavening, no healing for the broken sinews of society. We would therefore emphasize the need for active thinking about the organization of the Christian ministry.

As church responsibility overflows from the congregation to the neighbouring society, so it reaches out further through the wider society, the One Body which transcends distinctions of race and nation. We are aware of the deep concern felt in the Church about militant nationalism, racial tension, and colour conflicts - particularly in parts of Africa and North America, and in the Middle East. The Church is concerned with these problems, not only because of the suffering they cause or because they are politically inflammable, but because at bottom they are matters of theological principle, concerning our fundamental beliefs about God and man. Further treatment of them is beyond our competence; we would only plead that should they become, as well they might, a matter for discussion at a future Lambeth Conference, years of study be given to them in preparation, perhaps by a permanent Commission of the Conference set up for the purpose. Even in our own limited sphere of interest - the effect of such problems upon population and the family - the subject is too intricate and important for hasty or ill-prepared comment.

On the level of Christian action, however, responsibility has already many channels into which to overflow. The presence in Britain of unaccustomed numbers of immigrants from the West Indies in recent years has challenged the Church here to show its concern for fellow-churchmen from overseas, often living here perforce in great discomfort and enduring all the publicity attached to what might have been magnified into a spectacular "social problem". At an "impersonal" level Christians here have acted responsibly, in the work of co-ordinating social services, in helping to keep down racial tension, and, often through the Press, in helping English people to accommodate these visitors to their midst. At the "personal" level, however, in the taking of West Indians into the heart of congregations and homes, the Church of England, for many reasons, has been less generous and successful than other Churches. A similar inhibition is discernible in the little regard we pay, as a Church, to the needs of students and others, from Africa, Asia and the West Indies, living in our larger cities for fairly long periods. The Methodist Church, with its International House organization, has been more generous in expressing its fellowship with members from overseas. It is, in our view, inadequate to dismiss the accommodation and happiness of overseas students as " a University problem"; these men and women, away from their own families for a considerable period of time, sometimes need that personal friendship which acceptance into English church and family life can give, if they are to be carried over a period of considerable social and emotional strain. There is room here for much closer co-operation between

the parishes, the missionary societies, and such bodies as the East and West Friendship Council which work to integrate visitors into our society in a responsible way. We must envisage that more, not less, immigrants and students will be with us in future years; the responsibility of integrating them into the life of Church and society is correspondingly greater; so, of course, is the opportunity of cultural exchange and enrichment which that integration will bring.

Related Questions of Church Discipline.

We conclude with a reference to problems facing particular Churches which, although thrown into relief by what is happening socially in their environment, are yet more particularly matters of church discipline and ultimately of theological understanding. There is, we believe, widespread conflict of opinion and practice among Christian communities in Africa over the recognition of marriages between Christians celebrated in accordance with native law and custom, and over the refusal of infant baptism to the children of such marriages. There appear to be divergences in some places between the local church law and the practice of the clergy. Instances are quoted in which it appears that acute injustice is done to some families, and that good people are sometimes driven to a moral despair, by the exercise of a discipline which concerns itself less with the true, internal nature of the marriage than with the place and form of its celebration - whether in church or according to native custom. If it be true that consent and consummation and an intention of lifelong union are the things which make a marriage, then the Church cannot, theologically, limit its recognition and acceptance to marriages which have been solemnized in church. If the argument be urged that customary marriages are potentially polygamous, then theologically it ought to be urged also against marriages in Britain and elsewhere which are potentially legally dissoluble with the right of remarriage. This group of problems, therefore, seems to call for an examination of two related questions: "What conditions are necessary for a marriage which can be recognized by the Church?" and, "What, in this context, are the conditions required for baptism?" These are theological questions, reaching into the very nature of the man-woman relationship; their study is a pre-requisite of any ecclesiastical regulation, and of any serious attempt to allay the moral unrest which is troubling many in Churches overseas and in Britain to-day.

We have knowledge of other issues, with serious social as well as theological implications, confronting Churches as far apart as Africa, Ceylon, the West Indies, and Polynesia, each in different ways. We read of traditional codes of family life having broken down - the authority of the tribe or kindred or family weakened, the pre-puberty instruction and initiation of boys and girls corrupted or outmoded, the bride-price or dowry become a formality or a burden but not a safeguard, the marriage ceremonies (both church and customary) made prohibitively expensive, attended as they are by lavish entertainment and display. The old codes, while they lasted, may not have commended themselves easily to the European Christian mind: but at least they made for stability and cohesion, and their destruction leaves a void - social disintegration follows. Families from different tribes, for instance, thrown together in an urban location, finding that their respective tribal codes differ, cannot be blamed if they lose faith in them all; the consequent demoralization is no less painful. Local Churches are greatly exercised by these problems:

a solution, capable of saving or replacing the cohesive forces and eliminating the disruptive, will come more easily as the churches develop more and more under native leadership and the European influence is lessened; and this will require the reconsideration of some ecclesiastical codes.

Polygamy, which has come intermittently before Lambeth Conferences since 1888, is another subject which will not be left alone. In many parts of Africa it is reported to be on its way out, and that for non-religious reasons. But it will be a long time a-dying, and while it lasts it is not sufficient to judge it through European eyes or simply in terms of the sexual need of the African man. It has to be seen also in terms of African society, involving the tilling of the fields, the relationships between kindred and clan, the affording of security to otherwise "unattached" women - for some the alternative has been a life of prostitution. Far be it from us to suggest that these conditions are immutable, or that they can dictate a final answer. But until they are changed, and that from within African society itself, it would be folly to ignore the social purpose which polygamy fulfils.

In order to express vividly the dilemma, therefore, facing the Church in parts of Africa to-day, we would quote the words of one of our number, written in another context but relevant also to ours.

> The polygamous family, with its multiplication of kinship groups, plays a social, political and economic role in African society which must not be underestimated. We may well judge that it is inconsistent with the Western pattern of life which is being forced upon Africa. We may endorse the opinion that the "smaller" Western family of father, mother, and children, represents the ideal nucleus of the wider society of mankind. We may be right in believing that only that smaller family does justice to half the human race, and makes the fullest meaning of partnership possible for man and woman. We shall, as Christians, see all these judgements in the light of the New Testament value set upon personality. Polygamy cannot be brought into any consistency with the values of man and woman as revealed by Jesus Christ our Lord. All that is legitimate Christian reasoning. Only, in reaching these conclusions, let us face the fact that in Africa we are dealing with a polygamous society in a state of violent transition.
> The alternative to polygamy, with all its strict sanctions of taboo, in the framework of an ordered way of life is, for all too many, the sordid pursuit of promiscuous relationships with a mounting toll of illegitimacy and social delinquency. To those who look at Africa without blinkers the picture is a shattering one. Christ loves these African men and women, every one of them. He cares about the disintegrated patterns of their social life, the break-up of all their traditional loyalties. He suffers with them if what the New Testament says is true. A Church which is not a fellowship so strong that it can hold men and women, and their new family life, in its continually strengthening and forgiving embrace, and serve as a mutual benefit society in times of stress - as did the old polygamous family - such a Church is a very sad betrayal of its Lord. In the context of that betrayal, <u>wherever it occurs</u>, a legalistic insistence on monogamy <u>and</u> the penalty of ex-communication for any

lapse, comes very near to the repudiation of a trust.
What is called for, let us face it frankly, is a real revival in the Church of the kind that affects family relationships and the sense of corporate responsibility. At the same time we need, I believe, a completely fresh appraisal of the traditional use of excommunication as a means of discipline for the Church in Africa. This is a time of very rapid transition, and of widespread disintegration of the old patterns of society with their accepted sanctions. We cannot afford a moral theology which is so inflexible that it can make no provision for the needs of the bewildered mass of humanity such as is found in Africa today. Of course, there must be discipline. The visible Church is a society which lives within certain frontiers, else it would be invisible. The question we are entitled to ask is whether the means for safeguarding these frontiers in Africa today are those best calculated to achieve their purpose, and at the same time to prepare for the day when the frontiers of the Church in Africa will coincide with that continent's coastline and with the depths of the human nature which lives within it. (19)

(19) C.M.S. Newsletter, No. 196, July 1957, p. 5.

Further discussion of the topics raised in this final section of our Report would require much more study and experience than we can bring to them, and especially close consultation with the Churches concerned. They are matters upon which European judgement is necessarily less important than native judgement. We recommend that this group of subjects, like the racial and related problems, is of such importance that a standing commission of the Lambeth Conference be set up to study it, taking the best possible evidence from the field as well as from relevant theological, anthropological, and social studies.

Thus we conclude our Report. It would be presumptuous for us to describe it as a call to a new sense of social responsibility in the Church, for we know how concerned many Christians are about the world in which they live. Yet we know, from letters written to us (20)

(20) Archbishops and Metropolitans were invited to advise the Group of particular problems in their provinces.

and from our own observation, that this Christian concern to-day is more often a bewildered than an informed concern; that it is often felt more for the world across the sea than for the world at the church door - English church opinion, for instance, has been far more vocal over race relations in South Africa than over the living conditions of West Indians in England; and that the expression of this concern in much contemporary writing and speaking suffers, not only from want of a norm by which to judge the changes seen, but from want of awareness that such a norm can be established. We return therefore to the test of truth. Christians would repudiate as dishonest the falsification of history in the interest of argument or moral exhortation: we would plead that contemporary society, which is history unfolding, be considered worthy of the same scrupulous regard.

4 October 1957.

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